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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002627

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: HEAD OF SCIRI OUTLINES FOUR-STEP PLAN TO ADDRESS
THE ESCALATING VIOLENCE, ASKS FOR USG HELP

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Supreme Council for the Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) leader Abdel Aziz Al Hakim met with the Ambassador on July 20. Al Hakim highlighted growing concerns among the Shia that the USG was taking a political "observer role" in the wake of escalating violence, especially with regard to attacks on Shia. Al Hakim outlined his thoughts on the way forward, a four-point plan that included activating the GOI, especially the security apparatuses; the formation of "neighborhood watch" committees; emphasizing the role of the National Policy Council; and tackling the rebuilding of the Askariya mosque in the Samarra province. Al Hakim requested USG support for the plan, especially in "paving the way" with the Sunni community. The Ambassador assured Al Hakim of USG support for the success of the Iraqi government and the Shia as its majority community, and cited the potential of the Askariya mosque rebuilding plan to promote national unity and reconciliation. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Al Hakim expressed his frustration with perceived Sunni "bad will" in the political process. He stated that while Sistani issued fatwas and made public statements against the killing of Sunnis and the taking of Sunni mosques, major Sunni politicians were making statements in the media blaming the recent escalation in violence on the Shia. Al Hakim added the Sunni public posture with regard to attacks against the Shia were more often than not general. He said that he told VP Tariq al Hashimi in a recent meeting that the major Sunni political figures should play a leadership role in curbing the violence by condemning terrorist anti-Shia violence. The situation on the ground was worsening, Al Hakim added, pointing to the example of recent attacks in the Taji region. He stated that the younger generation of Shia, disappointed by the failure of the government to provide security, were increasingly taking matters into their own hands in defending themselves. Despite this, Al Hakim complained that the US appeared to be taking an "observer role." He said that the Shia community, from Baghdad to Najaf and from religious scholars to the people on the ground, were raising questions about the direction of U.S. policy in Iraq at this stage.

¶3. (C) Al Hakim described a four-pronged approach to addressing the violence. First, the GOI must activate its security apparatuses and develop its intelligence services, focusing on Baghdad security and especially the role of the police. Second, he recommended the formation of representative "neighborhood watch" committees to review each incident of violence in the area as it occurs. His third point focused on political engagement, noting that he had already engaged Sunni leadership directly and was hopeful that the National Policy Council would be a useful political forum for reaching agreement and consensus. Finally, Al Hakim emphasized that the rebuilding of the Askaria mosque in

Samarra was of great symbolic importance. Frustration over the non-resolution of this issue was mobilizing popular support Al Hakim observed, with thousands volunteering to travel to Samaraa to work on the shrine rebuilding project.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador expressed his support for Al Hakim's ideas. He reassured Hakim of President Bush's support for the success of the Iraqi government, an objective which has not changed since liberation. The fact that Sunni participation in the Iraqi government had not caused a marked improvement in the security situation, as both the USG and the Shia coalition had expected, was a matter of concern. The USG was questioning why innocent Shia and Sunni were dying in Iraq every day. The Ambassador agreed that both the Shia and Sunni political leadership had an important role to play in publicly condemning terror and death squads. He told Al Hakim that while the USG was conscious of how patient the Shia had been until now, it was important that they continue to work toward assuring their Sunni counterparts that their place in the new Iraqi government was secure.

¶5. (C) With regard to the Al-Askariya rebuilding project, Hakim noted that the financial resources and architectural expertise were lined up to begin work. He requested USG assistance in securing the roads to Samarra and convincing the Sunni who live in the area surrounding the mosque to promote an environment conducive to reconstruction. The Ambassador encouraged Hakim to develop the Samarra plan, noting that the USG supported an inclusive approach to rebuilding the shrine that would make the project, and its final product, a symbol of national reconciliation. Hakim said that he would think about how this could be done and would get back in touch with the Ambassador.

¶6. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK,

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minimize considered.
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